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THE IMPACT OF RELIGIOUS RITUAL INITIATION ON MALES

by

David McMillan

A Research Project Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

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by

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Abstract

The Impact of Religious Ritual Initiation on Males

The following paper is focused on revealing the influence that religious ritual initiations/rites of passages have on males from the religions of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. In the first section of the paper, I explain why it is important that the influence that religious ritual initiations have on males be studied. The second section covers the literature that was used to obtain my research results. The third section explains how the methodologies of content analysis and semiotics were incorporated into my research. In the fourth section, I reveal that practices such as self-control and discipline are common traits in how certain Muslims, Jews, and Christians construct manhood while also showing that religious pilgrimages have a high chance of influencing a person's identity. Lastly, in the fifth section I discuss the limitations of my research while mentioning potential opportunities for further research to be done on the impacts ritual initiations have on people from other religions and non-religious groups.

The Impact of Religious Ritual Initiation on Males

In our Western society, the practice of initiating boys into men is mostly unheard of. Given all the technological and cultural advancements that western societies have gone through, it is understandable why many would deem ritual initiation as unnecessary in that, we do not face the burdens of nature that our ancestors used to face. This should not mean, however, that we should undervalue the power that ritual initiation can have on the receiver. It is my belief that our generation of youth and adults need initiation more than ever. The purpose of this project is to show the importance and influence religious ritual initiation has on males, namely transitioning young boys into mature men. It is my belief that the severe lack of initiatory rites in our culture will continue to hamper both ourselves and our future generations in regards to our intellectual and spiritual advancement. Thus, it is my hope that this paper will convince many in our Western society to consider reintroducing ritual initiation for our current generation and future generations so that they may become more virtuous people who are just, loving, dutiful, and imaginative. Though I will try to emphasize the large influence that religious ritual initiation has on males, this should not be taken to mean that females are not in need of initiatory rites. For the betterment of our society, it is ideal that we encourage rites of passage for both males and females so that regardless of sex and gender, our people can reach their fullest potential as human beings.

Before moving on, a brief discussion of gender in relation to ritual initiation is necessary to accentuate the importance of including initiatory rites as part of our culture. For most of history, gender has usually been constructed for the purpose of fulfilling a societal role. If one was ascribed a gender by their society, they were usually given duties and responsibilities that they were expected to abide by. In today's world, however, there is much debate concerning

fixed roles of genders where some suggest that it is better to not have any gender roles whatsoever. Though the purpose of my paper is not aimed at gender roles, I believe that rites of passages can help individuals to fully realize their identity and purpose within their society. Cross-culturally, some rites of passage include the individual going through a hardship that tests their mental and physical fortitude. Usually, after the individual has passed said trial, they become a different person with a rejuvenated focus in life. From this, it is my belief that ritual initiations can help one to forge a fulfilling identity and life purpose, thus becoming a good example for others in their community to follow. After one has undergone ritual initiation, their newfound gender identity would not be a limitation but a stepping stone to make a positive impact in their society.

Throughout this paper, I will solely use examples from Abrahamic religions (viz. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) and their respective sects to show how each religion constructs manhood. Following from this, an examination of how people from these religions initiate their followers will be mentioned to explain the purpose of said initiation ritual. Because the religions of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism are the largest and most influential of Western faiths, they will be the primary focus of this project. A comparison of the differences of how individuals' lives were pre-initiation to post-initiation will also be done. This comparison will mostly be done on historical figures and second-hand research on participants of male initiation. Furthermore, although these religions and cultures differ, there will be some cross-cultural links drawn that show that certain practices and beliefs exist across male initiatory rites in Abrahamic religions.

In addition to the above methods, I will also be drawing comparisons of the masculine archetypes found in Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette's book *King, Warrior, Magician, Lover* to the results that male initiation has on the participant. As the name suggests, Moore and Gillette

define the mature psychological archetypes of the mature male to be king, warrior, magician, and lover. Similarly, they also provide negative counterparts to these archetypes, some of which are called the tyrant, sadist, manipulator, and impotent lover. Part of my goal will be to reveal that there is some truth to these archetypes by showing that the males who have undergone initiation reflect some of the characteristics of these archetypes. It is my belief that rites of passage give men the capacity to awaken innate masculine energies within themselves and by doing so, I believe that men can attain their fullest potential as human beings. The archetypes of the king, warrior, magician, and lover all have their essential place in a man's character because each provides vital traits that help men to be loving, dutiful, disciplined, just, intelligent, ambitious, etc. For instance, the king archetype is necessary for anyone that is in a position of leadership. Examples of this archetype can be found in teachers, presidents, club leaders, and even parents. The warrior archetype can be found in roles such as religious missionaries, martial artists, and soldiers. The magician archetype can be found in roles such as chemists, doctors, and computer engineers. Finally, the lover archetype is most appropriated to artists such as musicians, painters, and dancers. If a man is never initiated, he is therefore mostly relying on his undeveloped archetypes to live his life. As one can imagine, this may pose a problem for our society in the long-run in that, it entails that many adult males are not fully accessing their innate masculine energies and so, are not their fullest selves.

To support my claim that males are in need of initiatory rites, I will use several examples of real-life men that have undergone some form of rite of passage. For instance, if we take a look at Jesuit missionaries, we find the history of how they used transoceanic voyages as a rite of passage. In an article by Ulrike Strasser titled, "Braving the Waves with Francis Xavier: Fear and the Making of Jesuit Manhood", they write about how these ocean voyages proved to be

powerful tests of faith for Jesuit missionaries. Strasser writes, “Transoceanic vessels provided a crucial context for putting the Jesuit training and community members to the test...the transoceanic journey was also an emotional journey in which they practiced and internalized the correct expression and experience of fear” (Strasser, 2020, p. 81). For the Jesuit missionaries, these voyages functioned as a vessel to transform themselves into a different person altogether once their voyage ended. There were many hardships that the missionaries had to face, one of which was the deadly tempests that often occurred. These tempests often took the lives of many who happened to be caught in them and so whenever the ocean ships got caught in one, disarray would overcome the ship crew and its passengers. The Jesuits saw this disarray as a chance to put their training to use and thus, often used this chance to calm down their shipmates and pray to ask God to silence the deadly storm. Soon after their prayers, the tempest would often calm down. This miraculous act would often times incite the ship’s passengers to convert to Christianity, thus fulfilling a part of the missionaries’ objective. Aside from evangelization, the tempests were also a good way to prove a missionary’s faith in God. As mentioned earlier, tempests often took many people’s lives. When a ship was caught in one, it would violently sway the ship side to side, threatening to throw people overboard to their deaths. Of course, the Jesuits’ lives were also at risk, but most believed this to be a test from God and so, calmly sat in their quarters to pray.

To better understand the purpose of male ritual initiations, it is important that we also understand how people of varying faiths and cultures construct manhood. As far as we know, manhood has always been constructed for a purpose that serves a societal or religious need. For instance, in an article by Michael Satlow titled, ““Try to Be a Man”: The Rabbinic Construction of Masculinity’, he writes about the traits that certain Rabbis hold to be uniquely masculine.

Satlow writes that, “for the rabbis the manly characteristic of self-restraint is necessary for acquisition of the manly virtue, Torah study; and it is the virtue of Torah study which leads to a relationship to God” (Satlow, 2020, p. 27). They continue to say that, “For the rabbis, therefore, manliness is never secure; it is achieved through the constant exercise of discipline in pursuit of virtue, and vanishes the moment a male ceases to exercise that discipline” (Satlow, 2020, p. 27).

The belief that manliness can be lost is very interesting in itself. If manliness can be lost, then this may further emphasize the need for men to undergo a rite of passage. Although Satlow’s article is not centered on male initiation, it can be postulated that initiatory rites are deeply connected to many cultures’ perceptions of manliness. Thus, if we were to separate initiation from manhood, this may imply that men are not their fullest selves unless they have undergone a rite of passage. Furthermore, initiation rites can be seen as prompting men to continue performing their ascribed duties, thus enabling them to access the innate masculine energies that make a positive impact in their world.

Literature Review

In Adriaan van Klinken’s article ‘Men in the Remaking: Conversion Narratives and Born-Again Masculinity in Zambia’, the author interviews a group of men attending a Pentecostal church in Lusaka, Zambia. The group of men interviewed all identify as Pentecostal Christians and describe to Klinken their experiences of undergoing religious conversion. During the interview, all the interviewees gave their beliefs on what traits constitute a good man. Interestingly, all of the men interviewed mentioned how their view of manhood changed after converting to Pentecostalism. Prior to converting to Pentecostalism, all the men followed their society’s traditional conceptions of masculinity which included behaviors related to aggressiveness, alcohol, and sexual promiscuity. According to one interviewee dubbed Danny,

they state that “‘After receiving Christ and after reading the word of God, now I think: being a man is being responsible...Being responsible over yourself, over your surrounding and for other people’s life: for me, that is being a man’” (Klinken, 2012, p. 222). ‘Responsibility’ is a theme that is recurring among the interviewees. In addition, the interviewees also held highly the practice of self-control. Interviewee Danny mentioned that “‘Christian life goes with controls, and those controls help you in achieving certain things in life...Without Christian teaching your life is reckless, you don’t understand issues of sexuality and issues of managing your money’” (Klinken, 2012, p. 225). When questioned further about how their lives had changed post-conversion, several of the interviewees mentioned that they have taken life more seriously and thus, have stopped smoking, drinking, and having affairs with women. The experiences of these Pentecostal converts, further encourages the need to study and consider male ritual initiation as a standard for life. Their experiences highlight the significant transformations that can result from initiatory rites as it relates men’s conception of ethics and manhood. As mentioned above, all the interviewees experienced a change in their behaviors and thoughts and they continue to perpetuate their new manhood by following a way of life they believe Christ would permit.

In Zahra Ayubi’s article, ‘Rearing Gendered Souls: Childhood and the Making of Muslim Manhood in Pre-Modern Islamic Ethics’, she describes how boys and girls are transformed into adulthood through the ethics of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali and Nasir ad-Din Tusi. Much of Ayubi’s writing is concerned with the raising of boys to men, which they call *man-as-process*. In regards to raising boys, Ayubi mentions that “‘Boys are meant to be socialized from infancy to become leaders in the social and domestic hierarchies of power and intellect’” (Ayubi, 2019, p. 1182). She further contrasts this with the rearing of girls in that she mentions, girls are meant to play an instrumental role in their husbands’ ethical formation and practice (Ayubi, 2019, p. 1182). She

continues by stating that Tusi and Ghazali expound three areas that boys need in order to become ethical men which are: 1) principles of rationality and discipline, 2) moderation in regards to things like food and money, and 3) preparing boys for leadership in things like tutelage and fatherhood (Ayubi, 2019, pgs. 1190-1191). With successful teaching of these areas, it is believed that a boy will develop into a man that is responsible, humble, pious, and wise.

Due to the strict structure that is placed on a young male's development into adulthood, this can easily tie in to the necessity of initiatory rites. Initiatory rites, like the child rearing methods of Tusi and Ghazali, are a process in which the recipient must devote a certain time and/or place to practice their transformation. Furthermore, just as Ghazali and Tusi's methods of childrearing require a form of social affirmation that the individual has become an adult, so too do male initiations in that the male's transformation into manhood must be acknowledged by other members of the community. In a sense, child rearing and ritual initiation can be seen as one part of a whole that leads the recipient into mature adulthood, thus encouraging the need for both to be a fundamental part of every individual's life.

In Ulrike Strasser's article 'Braving the Waves with Francis Xavier: Fear and the Making of Jesuit Manhood', she describes the transoceanic voyages that Jesuit missionaries regularly went through. Strasser's article lays heavy emphasis on the experiences of Francis Xavier, though she also gives accounts from other Jesuits. Strasser described the Jesuit's voyages as "not only a physical passage from one place to another, but also a rite of passage from one state of being to another" (Strasser, 2020, pgs. 79-80). These transoceanic voyages proved to be powerful tests for Jesuit missionaries in that, there were many challenges and dangers that came with these voyages, many of which were deadly tempests that threatened the lives of all passengers onboard. However, the Jesuits believed these storms were a test from God to prove

their faith and so, many saw this as an opportunity to practice calmness of mind. As Strasser puts it, “the transoceanic journey was also an emotional journey in which they practiced and internalized the correct expression and experience of fear as stipulated by a Jesuit ‘emotional regime’” (Strasser, 2020, p. 81). With their calm demeanors, they would encourage all passengers of the ship to pray to God to ask for the tempest to pass, of which their prayers were usually answered. This phenomenal event would often encourage all non-Christian passengers to convert to Christianity, thus fulfilling a part of the Jesuits’ mission.

Examples such as these can be used to directly support the need for male rites of passage. As Strasser shows, we can easily see the transformative powers that occurred to Jesuit missionaries during their long voyages. Given that these voyages were often filled with adversity, we can further speculate that adversity may be a powerful factor for a rite of passage to be successful. As Strasser points out, “Fear is the pathway to God in this story...The intense emotional experience at sea indeed made Xavier wish and pray from more terrifying perils still” (Strasser, 2020, p. 88).

In John C. Olin’s article ‘The Idea of Pilgrimage in the Experience of Ignatius Loyola’, they write about the spiritual impact that pilgrimages had on Ignatius Loyola and what he did during these pilgrimages. In describing pilgrimages, Olin says that, “A pilgrimage can be a search, that is, an essentially interior journey toward some goal or ideal. It can involve the pursuit of meaning or a mission for one’s life, and it may effect inward growth or transformation” (Olin, 1979, p. 388). At a point in Ignatius’s lifetime, he suffered serious bodily injuries as a result of a cannonball shot by the French army when they invaded Navarre. Ignatius’s legs were badly damaged and so, he was bedridden for many months. During this time, Ignatius had a complete change of heart in regards to his life and decided to devote the rest

of his life to God by following the path of the saints. Olin states that Ignatius's transformation was inspired by two religious works that were about the lives of Christ and saints. Afterwards, Ignatius would continue to gain spiritual enlightenment as he sent out for his pilgrimages. Olin writes, "his [Ignatius] experiences at Manresa were of the utmost importance in his spiritual development. He informs us that God instructed him like a schoolmaster, that his mind was enlightened, and his understanding immeasurably deepened" (Olin, 1979, p. 390).

Several key points can be taken from the experiences of Ignatius. Given that he transformed his life during a time of hardship, this can be used to further justify the need for adversity in male initiation rites. Similar to the previous example with Jesuit missionaries, it took a degree of adversity for Ignatius to accept a new life in devotion to God. Additionally, Ignatius's experience with pilgrimages encourages us to consider the possibility of voyages being a suitable method for helping one to cultivate a new personal identity.

In Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette's book, *King, Warrior, Magician, Lover*, they argue for the importance of male initiation rites while at the same time, providing archetypes that they believe all adult men should fulfill. As the title suggests, Moore and Gillette list these archetypes as king, warrior, magician, and lover. Each archetype holds importance in a man's life, so if any one is not properly developed a man risks being incompetent or corrupt in his behaviors. In describing the king archetype, Moore and Gillette compare it to leadership roles that require the male to be adept in actions concerning justice, order, and harmony. The warrior archetype is compared to roles where the man is required to perform actions with a sense of duty. The magician archetype concerns the creative and intellectual aspect of a man, and so can deal with many things such as mathematics, medicine, technology, etc. Finally, the lover archetype is concerned with aspects of a man that promote compassion and empathy for others and their

environment. In addition to these positive archetypes, Moore and Gillette also list the polar negatives of each one if a man does not sufficiently develop his archetypes. These negative archetypes range from: tyrant, masochist, manipulator, and addicted lover. Moore and Gillette believe that ritual initiation can aid men in developing the positive archetypes, thus enabling more men in our society to be their fullest selves mentally, physically, and spiritually.

Moore and Gillette's construction of the mature masculine archetypes can tie directly into male ritual initiation in that, rites of passage can be seen as a way to awaken these archetypes. As we have seen from the previous examples, there is a process that men must go through in order to become seen socially as an adult by their community. Therefore, it may not be far-fetched to postulate that figures such as Ignatius Loyola and Francis Xavier experienced an awakening in at least some of the archetypes that Moore and Gillette construct. It could even be argued that Klinken's interviews with the Pentecostal men showed some traits of these archetypes.

In Michael Satlow's article "“Try To Be A Man”: The Rabbinic Construction of Masculinity', he explains how certain rabbis construct masculinity and the key aspects they believe a mature Jewish man should take up. According to Satlow, the rabbis believe that “being a man means using that uniquely male trait, self-restraint, in pursuit of the divine through Torah study” (Satlow, 1996, p. 20). Self-restraint was held highly amongst the rabbis because, they believed it to be necessary for one to properly study the Torah. By studying the Torah, they believed that one could attain a relationship with God. Because of this, Torah study was conceived as very masculine activity. Satlow continues to say that manhood was an attained status, and so a Jewish man was always at risk of losing his perceived manhood. Specifically, the rabbis held that “manliness is never secure; it is achieved through the constant exercise of discipline in pursuit of virtue, and vanishes the moment a male ceases to exercise that discipline”

(Satlow, 1996, p. 27). Regarding self-restraint, it was believed that only men had the power to control their carnal desires whereas women could not. To give an example of this self-control, Satlow writes how men were encouraged to control themselves during sexual intercourse with their wives. He writes that, “Manly modesty and self-restraint in sex reproduces men. The implication, of course, is that a man who allows himself to lose control during intercourse will produce female children.” (Satlow, 1996, p. 31).

At least within Abrahamic religions, Satlow’s article further shows some similarities as to the construction of masculinity. Self-restraint has been a recurring theme amongst Satlow’s, Klinken’s, and Ayubi’s articles as it relates to manhood. In Satlow’s article, we see that certain rabbis believe self-restraint to directly affect one’s relationship with God. Moreover, during conception self-restraint is so influential that it even alters the chance of whether a male or female child will be born. With that said, it will be interesting to see how self-restraint possibly ties into the formation of male rites of passage.

Kholoud Al-Ajarma’s study, ‘After Hajj: Muslim Pilgrims Refashioning Themselves’, reveals insight into the lives of Muslims who have returned from their Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca). Within Islam, it is obligatory for its followers to embark on a pilgrimage to Mecca (if they are financially and physically able to do so), and in Al-Ajarma’s (2021) study she interviews several Muslim-Moroccan men and women on their experience both during and after their pilgrimage. In Al-Ajarma’s article, she writes that all the interviewees experienced a change in personality upon returning from their Hajj. One interviewee mentions that, “Pilgrimage is a great experience; it is an *opportunity* to cleanse oneself from sins...When one returns home, he is like a new born baby; one purified from sins...It is an opportunity for a new start and a renewed faith” (Al-Ajarma, 2021, p. 5). She further writes that, “Upon return from Hajj, many pilgrims

manifested a desire to achieve closer proximity to God, an inner state achievable through the devout performance of religious duties.” (Al-Ajarma, 2021, pgs. 5 – 6). It is worth noting, however, that many of the interviewees admitted that the change in personality due to their Hajj was only temporary in that, a few months after returning from their pilgrimage they reverted back to their old behaviors. The interviewees explain to Al-Ajarma that the reason for this reversion is due to the worldly responsibilities that they must do upon returning home.

Al-Ajarma’s study reveals more information onto the impact that a pilgrimage can have on a person’s identity and behavior. Based on her article, it is clear that for Muslims who embark on a Hajj they will have a high chance of a changed personality upon returning home. This changed personality included traits such as being more religiously devout and being kinder to one’s family. From this, it could be speculated that ‘sacred space’ can be an efficacious component of religious initiations in that, it isolates the participant so that they cannot be distracted by outside sources, thus allowing their transformation to properly be completed.

Samuel Perry & Kyle Longest (2019) provide enlightening statistical information on the influence religious ritual initiations have on youth in their article, ‘Examining the Impact of Religious Initiation Rites on Religiosity and Disaffiliation over Time’. In their article, they use several studies done on individuals over a period of several years to measure the religiosity of people who performed a religious ritual initiation or rite of passage during their youth. They say that from one study, “adolescents who went on a short-term mission trip between surveys grew more committed to traditional religious beliefs and were more faithful in worship attendance, Bible reading, prayer, and personal witnessing” (Perry & Longest, 2019, p. 892). In another study concerning U.S. Catholics they write, “those who had been on a religious pilgrimage were more likely to endorse orthodox Catholic positions on contraception and the celibacy of priests

(though not other issues)” (Perry & Longest, 2019, p. 893). Furthermore, they state that youth who experienced a rite of passage are over 30 percent less likely to disaffiliate from their religion than youth who did not experience a rite of passage (Perry & Longest, 2019, p. 901).

The statistical information presented by Perry & Longest (2019) is crucial in showing that religious rites of passages will have a high chance of influencing one’s religious identity. As is mentioned in their article, those who underwent a rite of passage showed higher signs of religiosity than those who did not go through a rite of passage. It should be mentioned, however, that Perry & Longest’s (2019) study mostly composed of Christian participants. Therefore, this study should not be seen to accurately represent all the Abrahamic faiths. Regardless, this study is still valuable in proving the significant influence a ritual initiation can have on someone’s personality.

Sacred religious scripture will also be used to pinpoint potential forms of ritual initiation. As such, passages from ‘The Orthodox Study Bible’ will be incorporated into the results of my research. This specific bible contains both the Old Testament and the New Testament and provides footnotes that aid the reader in understanding the context behind certain words and verses. From this bible, the books of Genesis and Ephesians will be used to show that forms of ritual initiation and constructions of adulthood are present within it. Specifically, the story of Abraham will be taken into account to explain how parts of Abraham’s journey can be considered as a rite of passage.

The story of Abraham contains passages that reveal that Abraham himself had to undergo trials in order to prove his loyalty to God. From these trials, Abraham’s connection with God is strengthened and he grows in his spirituality as a result of this. Secondly, the book of Ephesians contains insightful information as to what is expected of a mature Christian. In particular,

Ephesians reveals how people are to control themselves in regards to sexuality and marriage in that, it warns against fornication and speaks of the roles of husbands and wives. By using this bible, I will have direct access to knowledge on what constitutes an ethical Christian man and the potential trials that God may use to test a person's loyalty. These trials from God may possibly be seen as a rite of passage in that, if a person passes God's trial they will grow in devoutness to God.

The second sacred scripture that will be used is an English translation of the Islamic Qur'an by Abdullah Yusuf Ali. Similar to the Christian Bible, the Qur'an contains passages that possibly hint at a form of rite of passage. It also contains passages that instruct Muslims of what actions an ethical man should do. Regarding rites of passage, in the eighth chapter of the Qur'an it is written that Allah reminded the Prophet Muhammad, "Just as thy Lord ordered thee out of thy house in truth" (Qur'an, 2020, 8:5). From this verse alone, there is speculation to be had on its context in that, the act of Allah ordering Muhammad out of his house could possibly be seen as a form of ritual initiation. Furthermore, the fourth chapter of the Qur'an also gives instruction on how men are to behave in their sexuality and marriage. Similar to what can be found in the Bible, the Qur'an instructs men not to engage in fornication and shows men how to properly act as a husband.

By using the Qur'an, my research will have access to core Islamic teachings on what constitutes a good Muslim man. Secondly, the journey of Prophet Muhammad as told in the Qur'an may be used as a good example to illustrate rites of passage in that, Allah guided Muhammad through various dangers in order to spread His message. Through this guidance, Muhammad was able to successfully reveal Allah's message to the people, thus Muhammad gradually became a better servant of Allah throughout his life.

Method

The methodologies that will be used in this project will be a combination of conceptual research with secondhand empirical research. In composing this project's methodology, I will primarily be using the methods of content analysis and semiotics to study how male ritual initiation has been incorporated within Christianity, Judaism, and Islam throughout history and to reveal the impacts that male ritual initiation has on its recipients. It is my belief that these two methods will yield effective results in showing the influence that ritual initiations can have on males. To begin, I will start by explaining the methods of content analysis and semiotics. I will then go on to describe how these methods will be incorporated into my project and the advantages of using them.

In describing content analysis, Chad Nelson and Robert Woods Jr. state that it is a form of textual analysis which is utilized to examine the messages embedded in texts (Nelson & Woods, 2011, Introduction section, para. 1 – 2). Content analysis can be used for a variety of purposes and it is one of the more popular forms of textual analysis used by scholars of religious studies. The method of content analysis is also versatile in that, it is often used in conjunction with other forms of methodologies such as surveys, interviews, and focus groups. Content analysis has many functions, one of which is that it is useful if researchers want to identify patterns or commonalities within a particular genre (Nelson & Woods, 2011, Functions section, para. 2). Another is that “researchers can use content analysis to identify differences by drawing comparisons between similar types of variables in two different systems or in dissimilar contexts” (Nelson & Woods, 2011, Functions section, para. 3). Thirdly, content analysis can be used to “measure specific phenomenon against some standard in order to classify the phenomenon, make a judgement about it, or determine how close it comes to meeting a

particular standard or expectation” (Nelson & Woods, 2011, Functions section, para. 5). The authors state that one of the advantages of content analysis is that it can provide valuable cultural and historical insight into research problems, because it is concerned with existing texts that can last for long periods of time (Nelson & Woods, 2011, Advantages section, para. 3).

My second method of choice, semiotics, is a method that refers to a range of methodologies developed to theorize and systematize our intuitive understandings of communication, signification, meaning and interpretation (Yelle, 2011, “Overview”, para. 1). According to Robert Yelle, semiotic analysis starts from “the cataloguing of iconic and indexical relationships among segments of a text or ritual performance, then considers what these relationships contribute to the pragmatic function of a text ritual in its context of performance” (Yelle, 2011, Chapter summary). When using semiotic analysis to study rituals, it is important that one acknowledge the complexity of ritual signs. For instance, when examining the significance of ritual magic, Yelle breaks down the ritual actions as follows: 1) Voodoo doll’s foot injured = victim’s foot injured, and 2) Weapon anointed = wound heals (Yelle, 2011, Semiotic analysis section, table 2.17.2). Yelle gives another example in regards to Hindu tantric mantras. They state that the repetition of imperative verbs (e.g., *Om hrim srim klim*) “strengthens the force of the spell, while...mantras such as *hrim* add poetic and rhythmic force” (Yelle, 2011, “Example 4”, para. 2).

With that said, these two methodologies are certain to be advantageous to anyone seeking to understand the significance of ritual initiations and how they influence manhood and males’ perceptions of masculinity. Given that my project is focused on male ritual initiation, it seems logical that I incorporate aspects of a semiotic approach into my research. By using semiotics, I will be better able to discern which parts of a ritual initiation are most impactful to a male’s

transformation and identity. The types of initiations in my project will vary according to the males' culture and religion. For instance, in my studies of the Jesuit missionary, Ignatius Loyola, I will be using aspects of semiotics to understand how pilgrimage influenced Ignatius's identity as both a Christian and man. In order to spread the word of God, Ignatius traveled for many years during of which he had many experiences, one of which was the formation of the Society of Jesus. By using semiotics, I will examine the parts of Ignatius's pilgrimage that encouraged him to change his character. It is also important to note that before Ignatius turned into a Jesuit missionary, he was previously a soldier who had been severely injured during a war which caused him to be bedridden for many months. During this time Ignatius had a profound revelation which caused him to give up his old way of life and instead, dedicate the rest of his life to serving God. In this scenario, semiotics will be used to analyze the significance of Ignatius's revelation, and determine the traits that made this revelation so powerful for Ignatius.

Similar to Ignatius, semiotics will be incorporated to study how the Jesuit missionary, Francis Xavier, experienced a change in his identity. As mentioned earlier, it was common for Jesuit missionaries to embark on long oceanic voyages in order to spread Christianity. Given that these voyages often served as a way for missionaries to test their faith in God, it will be useful to apply a semiotic approach to understand the process of how these missionaries used the adversities that came with the voyages as a way to grow in character. For example, one of the challenges that Jesuit missionaries had to face were violent storms that threatened their lives. In this case, semiotics will be utilized to pinpoint the specific instances that encouraged these missionaries to strengthen their faith in God, thus transforming them into new people if they survived the deadly storm.

Another instance where semiotics will be used is in the case study of the Zambian men who converted to Pentecostal Christianity. In this study, all of the men interviewed described how they had been transformed during their conversion. According to the interviewees, they had all been living sinful and unfulfilling lives prior to their conversion. They described their conversion process as being ‘born again’ into a new person where God has given them a chance to be more virtuous. Like the previous examples, a semiotic approach will be utilized to discern what aspects of the conversion process were most significant for these Pentecostal men. Given that each of the men interviewed had a different life story that encouraged them to convert to Pentecostalism, I will use semiotics to individually analyze the conversion process for each interviewee.

The method of content analysis will be very useful when analyzing my non-empirical sources, some of which will be the Holy Qur’an and Bible. Given that my project is focused on Abrahamic religions, it is therefore appropriate that I dissect certain chapters and passages of the Qur’an and Bible that have mention of rituals in relation to manhood. By using the method of content analysis, I will be able to better interpret the context of biblical and Qur’anic scripture to show that my project is not in conflict with the teachings of the Bible and Qur’an. Furthermore, a content analysis methodology will enable me to compare the scriptures of these holy texts with my empirical sources so that I can identify any correlation between the holy scriptures and the experiences of interviewees in case studies.

Content analysis will also prove useful when comparing the responses of interviewees from my empirical sources. Because each group of interviewees differ in terms of nationality, religious denomination, and culture it will be very useful to compare and contrast any similarities and differences that may arise amongst the groups. This will be especially important if there is

evidence to show that there is a cross-cultural trend amongst the interviewed men. Likewise, content analysis will enable me to pinpoint any trends between my empirical sources and non-empirical sources that may potentially aid my project in showing the influence and importance of male ritual initiation.

With all that being said, it is my belief that the methodologies of semiotics and content analysis will prove most effective in my goal to show how male ritual initiation can be beneficial to men in our society. Being that semiotics is largely focused on rituals, it seems appropriate that I should use a semiotic methodology to discern the importance of why a ritual is performed in the first place. Each culture has its own reasons for developing initiatory rites, thus it is crucial that we understand the context and purpose for why an initiatory rite is constructed. It is my hope that by doing so, we can better appreciate the importance of rites of passage. Likewise, a content analysis methodology helps to pinpoint any congruencies that may exist among my sources. By using this method, I believe that I can show that ritual initiation is an effective means of transforming individuals' characters, thus encouraging more people to undergo a form of initiation themselves.

Results

The following paper contains various studies concerning the types of religious ritual initiations utilized by Abrahamic religions (Christianity, Judaism, Islam) and how certain members of these religions construct manhood. Two methodologies will be used to interpret the meaning and purpose of the topics in this paper. The first method will be content analysis, which will primarily be used to explain the meaning of Biblical and Qur'anic verses. The second method will utilize semiotics, which will be used to interpret the pragmatic function of ritual initiations mentioned in this paper. This paper will be comprised of three parts. In the first

section, I will go over how certain groups of Christians, Jews, and Muslims construct masculinity. In the second section, I will share information on how the act of voyage (or pilgrimage) has been an effective method for shaping people's identity. Lastly, in the third section I will share information on a study done about the impacts of religious ritual initiation/rites of passage on a person's religiosity while also further speculating on the potential benefits of ritual initiations for males. Before moving on, I must mention that the religious groups covered in this paper are not necessarily intended to represent all denominations within Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Because this paper may not fully represent all the sects within these religions, it is my intention that my research should only represent the specific religious groups covered in this paper.

Before examining male ritual initiations, it is proper that we first understand the concepts and constructions that certain Jews, Christians, and Muslims hold of manhood. In Michael Satlow's article, "'Try to Be a Man': The Rabbinic Construction of Masculinity", he states that for certain rabbis "being a man means using that uniquely male trait, self-restraint, in the pursuit of the divine through Torah study" (Satlow, 1996, p. 20). Satlow explains that for the rabbis, it is vital for a man to practice self-restraint if he is to gain wisdom through Torah study. Studying the Torah is considered a manly virtue amongst the rabbis because, it is believed that Torah study will lead to a relationship with God. Concerning self-restraint, the rabbis also believe that a man must practice self-restraint in other activities, such as sexual intercourse with his spouse. In regards to sexual intercourse, it is believed amongst the rabbis that if a man has self-control during intercourse, he will produce male offspring. Conversely, if a man does not have self-control during intercourse, he will produce female children. Interestingly, Satlow also mentions that the rabbis do not believe manliness to be a secure trait. According to Satlow, "For the rabbis,

therefore, manliness is never secure; it is achieved through the constant exercise of discipline in pursuit of virtue, and vanishes the moment a male ceases to exercise that discipline.” (Satlow, 1996, p. 27). In this regard, therefore, a human cannot simply be born a male and be considered a man. The male must always practice his Jewish virtues throughout his life if he is to be considered a man by his fellow peers.

Moving on to an Islamic perspective of masculinity, in an article done by Zahra Ayubi called, ‘Rearing Gendered Souls: Childhood and the Making of Muslim Manhood in Pre-Modern Islamic Ethics’, she reveals how pre-modern Islamic ethics are used to rear young Muslim boys into adult men. The first area of behavior that is used to rear boys concerns teaching them “principles of discipline and rationality...which include listening to one’s parents, developing control over the self (*nafs*), and being timely with prayers and religious observances” (Ayubi, 2019, p. 1190). This method is to be employed as soon as the male child starts weaning and is considered to be crucial for the boy to learn of responsibility both in religious matters or not. The second area concerns teaching the boy about necessity and moderation in regards to things like food, drink, money, speech, dress, and more. This is done to prevent the boy from becoming greedy, gluttonous, and flamboyant. The third area of behavior concerns preparing the boy for “domestic and civic leadership via education and tutelage in specific skills, knowledge, and understanding as well as long-term preparation for independent life as an adult, husband, father, and caregiver for one’s aging parents.” (Ayubi, 2019, pgs. 1190 – 1191). A boy’s choice of profession is considered vital to bringing out his ethical potential as this determines the amount of ‘good’ he is able to do in his society (Ayubi, 2019, pg. 1196). Overall, it is considered that disciplining these areas of behavior will turn the boy into a mature and ethical man for his community.

More insight into a religious construction of masculinity can be witnessed in Adriaan S. van Klinken's article 'Men in the Remaking: Conversion Narratives and Born-Again Masculinity in Zambia'. In this study, Klinken interviews seventeen Zambian men who had converted to Pentecostal Christianity. In the interviews, the men reveal how converting to Pentecostalism changed their identity, life, and conception of manhood. Several of the interviewees mentioned that prior to their conversion, they lived a sinful life which involved things such as taking drugs, womanizing, and violent behavior. Regarding the conception of masculinity, one of the men interviewed stated that, "“After receiving Christ and after reading the word of God, now I think: being a man is responsible. Being responsible over yourself, over your surrounding and for other people's life: for me, that is being a man”" (Klinken, 2012, p. 222). Additionally, the men interviewed also reveal why the virtue of 'self-control' is an important aspect of being a Pentecostal man. One of the interviewees says, "Christian life goes with controls, and those controls help you in achieving certain things in life... Without Christian teaching your life is reckless, you don't understand issues of sexuality and issues of managing your money" (Klinken, 2012, p. 225). Klinken writes that for the Pentecostal converts, the trait of self-control is used as a way of proving male fortitude. He also writes that though the converts may see themselves as 'born-again' into a new life, they must constantly ensure that they do not fall back into the sinful temptations of their pre-conversion lives.

Furthermore, we can find evidence within the Bible and Qur'an that point towards what is expected of a mature person. In Ephesians it instructs, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. *'Honor your father and mother,'* which is the first commandment with promise: *'that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.'*" (The Orthodox Study Bible, 2008, Ephesians. 6:1-3). Similarly, in the Qur'an it says "We have enjoined on man

kindness to his parents... ‘O my Lord! Grant me that I may be grateful for Thy favor which Thou has bestowed upon me, and upon both my parents” (The Qur’an, 2020, 46:15). Additionally, both the Bible and Qur’an prohibit the act of premarital sexual intercourse. Concerning marriage, the fourth chapter of the Qur’an states “provided ye seek [them in marriage] with gifts from your property, desiring chastity, not lust” (The Qur’an, 2020, 4:24). Likewise, in the Bible it says, “But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not be named among you, as is fitting for saints...that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God” (The Orthodox Study Bible, 2008, Ephesians. 5:3-5).

Based on the mentioned articles, it is apparent that the ethics of pre-modern Jews and Muslims hold a rather structured way of rearing boys into men. In both Satlow’s and Ayubi’s articles, we see that the practice of moderation or self-restraint is considered to be a masculine virtue. A man must not only practice this trait in regards to his religion, but he must also practice it in everyday activities for the rest of his life. There does not appear to be any activity that is permissible in which a man may carelessly indulge in without consequence. As is mentioned in Satlow’s article, a male’s manhood is never secure, so it is the responsibility of the male to constantly show to his community that he is doing what is required of him. Secondly, in both the Qur’an and Bible we see that it is impermissible for a man (or woman) to engage in premarital intercourse. The Bible even goes as far to say that a man who fornicates will be not allowed in God’s kingdom. These verses can potentially be tied back to the virtue of ‘self-control’ in that, if a man fornicates, this may imply that he has failed in moderating his sexual urges. We also saw that both the Bible and Qur’an instruct men and women to respect their parents. Ayubi’s article also mentioned how it was expected of men to be caregivers for their aging parents. This can

possibly be tied to teaching men the virtues of humility in that, they must understand that their existence was only possible from God's will. Thirdly, it is evident that the discipline in being consistent with one's religious practices are also seen to be a masculine virtue. Again, this may tie back into humility in that, by engaging in religious activity a man therefore shows respect towards God and so, accepts that God is a higher being than him.

Moving on to the actual performance of ritual initiations, it seems evident that pilgrimages can be used as an effective form of identity transformation. One example of this can be observed by looking at the life of Ignatius Loyola of whom had profound life experiences that forever changed his personality. An instance where Ignatius's life changed was after he had been severely injured from a cannon ball that badly damaged his legs. This injury caused Ignatius to be injured for many months, during which he had a change of heart and decided to give up his worldly ambitions for that of serving God. According to John C. Olin, Ignatius was inspired to change his ways after reading two religious works being, a life of Christ and a collection of saints' lives known as *Flos sanctorum* (Olin, 1979, p. 390). After reading these works, Ignatius began to question himself on his life purpose. It is important to note that Ignatius underwent this change of heart during a time of burden (due to being bedridden) for a long period.

John C. Olin describes pilgrimage as "a search, that is, an essentially interior journey toward some goal or ideal. It can involve the pursuit of meaning or a mission for one's life, and it may effect inward growth or transformation" (Olin, 1979, p. 388). It was not until after Ignatius's conversion that he began his pilgrimage by setting out for Catalonia, during of which he had a mystical experience from God. Olin states that Ignatius's mystical experience was that "God instructed him like a schoolmaster, that his mind was enlightened, and his understanding immeasurably deepened...he gained a clearer picture of what he should do in the service of

Christ and a keener sense of an apostolate or mission” (Olin, 1979, p. 390). Clearly, we can see that for Ignatius, venturing beyond his homeland proved to be a life changing experience that gave him clarity on his life purpose.

Similarly, if we look at the lives of other Jesuit missionaries, we can find more evidence to show that venturing out of one’s homeland can be a life-changing experience. In Ulrike Strasser’s article, ‘Braving the Waves with Francis Xavier: Fear and the Making of Jesuit Manhood’, she talks about how oceanic voyages were a powerful way of transforming a Jesuit missionary’s personality. Strasser states that voyages “mark not only a physical passage from one place to another, but also a rite of passage from one state of being to another” (Strasser, 2020, pgs. 79 – 80). These oceanic voyages often came with hardships that encouraged the Jesuits to harden their faith in God. For instance, it was not uncommon for deadly storms to threaten the lives of onboard passengers. Many passengers would often die from these storms, but the Jesuits saw these storms as a test to hold their faith in God. Strasser says that “Transoceanic vessels provided a crucial context for putting the Jesuit training and community members to the test...the transoceanic journey was also an emotional journey in which they practiced and internalized the correct expression and experience of fear” (Strasser, 2020, p. 81).

A third example of pilgrimage can be seen from Kholoud Al-Ajarma’s (2021) study of Muslim men and women who underwent the pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj) as part of their Muslim obligations. In her study, Al-Ajarma interviews several Muslim men and women on their experiences during and after the Hajj which reveal insightful information on the effects pilgrimage can have on the individual. Al-Ajarma writes that “many of my interlocutors described the Hajj as a transformative experience on both personal and social levels. When they returned from Mecca, my interlocutors spoke about their aspirations to transform and live up to

their new status at home” (Al-Ajarma, 2021, p. 2). She further writes that, after a Muslim has returned from their Hajj, they are often expected by their community to try and live up to the virtues of being a Muslim more so than they were prior to embarking on Hajj. Some of the effects that Hajj can have on Muslims is that it impacted the “religious beliefs and social attitudes of Muslims including feelings of unity with Muslims, increased observance of Islamic practices, such as prayer and fasting, and increased belief in equality and harmony among ethnic groups, in addition to favorable attitudes toward women” (Al-Ajarma, 2021, p. 3). However, not all of the Muslims who take their Hajj witness a permanent change in personality as Al-Ajarma points out that her interviewees found it difficult to keep up with their religious devotions upon returning home to their worldly responsibilities.

There are also Biblical and Qur’anic verses that hint towards a need for voyages as a form of spiritual initiation. For instance, in the book of Genesis, God speaks to Abram by saying ““Get out of your country, from your kindred and from your father’s house, to a land I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great” (The Orthodox Study Bible, 2008, Genesis. 12:1-2). In the eighth chapter of the Qur’an, Allah briefly reminds the Prophet Muhammad “Just as thy Lord ordered thee out of thy house in truth” (The Qur’an, 2020, 8:5). These verses are particularly noteworthy because in it, God clearly instructed Abram and the Prophet Muhammad to leave their homes. By leaving these things, God (Allah) promises Abram that great things will come onto him and ensures Muhammad that he will find truth. If we understand that voyages are an important part of ritual initiations then we can possibly see Abram’s and Muhammad’s home and their country as comfort zones which are holding them back from achieving great things in life. This, however, does not mean that embarking on a voyage is guaranteed to be safe. This can be further seen in the tenth verse of Genesis when

Abram travels south with his wife Sarai to Egypt which reads, “Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to dwell there, for the famine was severe in the land.” (The Orthodox Study Bible, 2008, Genesis. 12:10). From this verse, it can possibly be speculated that any rite of passage involving travel will test the recipient with some form of burden, similar to what was observed in the transoceanic voyages of Jesuit missionaries. It is worth pointing out that Abram’s and Muhammad’s journeys were ones specifically initiated by God. Even though Abram and Muhammad had a special connection with God among others, it is evident that God permitted hardships to come across their journeys. A potential reason for this could be that God wanted to test their loyalty to Him, and so used the burdens that come with long voyages as a way to test their commitment to God’s instruction.

From the examples of Ignatius Loyola and other Jesuit missionaries it is evident that ‘hardship’ played a significant role in shaping the recipient’s identity. In the case of Ignatius, he did not begin to change his life until after he became severely injured, resulting in him being bedridden. As we know, being bedridden drastically limits the number of activities one can partake in and so, this gave Ignatius a lot of time to contemplate his purpose in life. With that said, we may also say that hardship gave Ignatius the opportunity to reflect on his life in that, had he not been injured he might not have thought to change his life path. The same situation can be observed with Strasser’s example of the Jesuit missionaries in that, they too had to undergo the trials and tribulations of oceanic travel to spread their religious teachings. The Jesuit missionaries not only had to brave deadly tempests but also face other dangers such as disease and mutiny. The Jesuits saw these dangers not just as a way to test their faith in God, but also as a way to practice their Jesuit training such as converting the ship passengers. Therefore, in the case of the

Jesuit missionaries ‘hardship’ could be seen as a way to strengthen one’s character through things like piety and discipline.

It is also worth noting how the act of traveling played a role in shaping these figures’ identities. Though Ignatius had a change of heart during his time being bedridden, we see that this was not the last time he would have a spiritual encounter. As we see in Olin’s article, we notice that after he traveled outside of his country, he experienced a revelation from God. In a similar sense, the Jesuit missionaries during transoceanic voyages also experienced a change in personality once the voyage was over. As Strasser puts it, “a religious man impelled to spread the gospel abroad excitedly boards a ship in Europe, only to land on foreign shores as a true Jesuit missionary at journey’s end.” (Strasser, 2020, p. 80). We also saw from Al-Ajarma’s study of Muslims performing their Hajj, that there is a high chance that Muslims who return from their pilgrimage will change their personality even if it is only temporary. In one way, the act of pilgrimage can be seen as the beginning of one leaving their comfort zone. Leaving our comfort zones is a simple but necessary act if people are to develop into mature beings. This does not only apply to religious people but all humans. Within the realm of combat sports, for instance, if one wishes to become a skilled boxer, they will inevitably have to participate in a boxing match. As most know, a boxing match will almost always consist of the two participants dealing heavy damage to one another, often at the risk of a concussion or even death. Once a boxer steps into the ring, they are obligated to fight. Therefore, the boxing match can be seen as a step out of one’s comfort zone and represents the hardships one will have to go through when transforming their identity.

Lastly, in a study by Kyle Longest and Samuel Perry (2019) we can see the significance that participating in a ritual initiation can have on a person’s identity. In their article, ‘Examining

the Impact of Religious Initiation Rites on Religiosity and Disaffiliation over Time', they reveal numerous studies that show how religious initiation rites influence a person's devotion to their religion. In one study, they mention that "adolescents who went on a short-term mission trip between surveys grew more committed to traditional religious beliefs and were more faithful in worship attendance, Bible reading, prayer, and personal witnessing" (Longest & Perry, 2019, p. 892). In another study they write how Russian Muslims returning from their Hajj experienced a change in that, "the Hajj experience made Muslims more devout and more tolerant of religious out-groups" (Longest & Perry, 2019, p. 893). They further go on to speak of the degree of influence different types of rites can have. They write, "because traditional rites like bar/bat mitzvahs and confirmation leading up to first communion require preparation (e.g., studying Hebrew, attending classes) compared to baptism that may be rather spontaneous, these rites may be more transformative for adherents' religious identities" (Longest & Perry, 2019, p. 893). Later in their article, they reveal interesting finds concerning the chances of people holding onto their religion after a form of initiation. Based on several surveys taken across several years, Longest & Perry (2019) mention that individuals who underwent a religious rite of passage during youth were more likely to stick with their religion than those who did not undergo a rite of passage. They write, "almost 40 percent of youth who did not experience a religious rite of passage have disaffiliated by young adulthood, while less than 25 percent of youth who had such an experience have disaffiliated" (Longest & Perry, 2019, p. 899). They also state that those who took a religious rite of passage showed higher signs of religiosity than those who did not take a rite of passage.

Based on Longest & Perry's (2019) study, we can already see how significant a religious ritual initiation can be. It is clear that if someone partakes in a ritual initiation of some sort that

they are more likely to remain religious individuals throughout their life. Thus, for those who are religious and value their religious community it makes sense that they should consider it crucial to undergo a rite of passage. This may ensure that a religious community remains bonded to one another and may even result in an increase of the overall population who consider themselves as religious. Secondly, going back to Klinken's (2012) study, we can also see the power that religious conversion can have on a man's conception of life and manhood. All of the interviewees from Klinken's study report how their life had changed for the better after their conversion to Pentecostalism. From this we can speculate that religious conversion itself can be utilized as an effective method of ritual initiation.

Using the evidence that has been gathered for this study, it seems appropriate to presume that religious ritual initiations (or rites of passage) can have a large impact on a male's psychological and physical development. Amongst the Abrahamic religions, it is apparent that religious conversion/initiation and rites of passage play a crucial role in determining how male youths grow into adulthood which directly affects their religiosity. I propose then, that religious initiation should always be seen with high importance in regards to a community's psychological and physical health. As we have seen from the studies shown, there is a high probability that individuals will remain with their religion if they undergo a ritual initiation of some sort. I have also shown studies that reveal how the act of pilgrimage can greatly influence an individual's personality. Due to the potential positive influence a rite of passage can have on a person's development, it may benefit communities to emphasize the need for youth to undergo a rite of passage. Though this paper was focused on religious initiations, this does not mean that nonreligious initiations should not be considered for secular communities.

Moreover, using Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette's psychological archetypes of king, warrior, magician, and lover as a reference, it is possible that ritual initiations may be key for males to unlock their mature psyche. For instance, Moore & Gillette (1990) state that the two functions of the king archetype are to maintain order and provide fertility and blessings. Regarding the function of 'order', Moore & Gillette state "It is the mortal king's duty not only to receive and to take his people this right order of the universe and cast it societal form but, even more fundamentally, to embody it in his own person" (Moore & Gillette, 1990, p. 56). They further state that the function of 'fertility/blessing' concerns the generative aspects of individuals and society such as with childbirth, crops, and herds that help societies to flourish. With that said, it could be possible that a ritual initiation such as a Muslim's Hajj or a Christian's missionary trip could implant a feeling of spiritual maturity in the recipient that they are better able to be religious leaders. Ritual initiations may also awaken the warrior archetype in that, this archetype is heavily concerned with virtues like duty, responsibility, discipline, control, and loyalty. In describing the warrior archetype, Moore & Gillette write, "The Warrior energy is concerned with skill, power, and accuracy, and with control, both inner and outer, psychological and physical. The Warrior energy is concerned with training men to be 'all that they can be'" (Moore & Gillette, 1990, p. 82). The warrior archetype can possibly be connected to ritual initiations in that, they may encourage a sense of religious duty upon the recipient, similar to how it is a Muslim's duty to travel to Mecca at least once in their life. Regardless of whether Moore and Gillette are accurate of their archetypal constructions, given the evidence presented in this paper, it is possible that religious ritual initiations have helped men to mature in their psychological archetypes. Based on my research, there is evidence to support the claim that religious initiations can help men to forge the traits of leadership, responsibility, and self-control into their psyche.

Thus, it is worth it for individuals to consider the potential benefits that religious initiations can do for their psychological well-being. Of course, further study will be needed to confirm whether religious ritual initiations have a high chance of ensuring a male's psychological maturity.

Discussion

From this project, it is my hopes that I have contributed at least somewhat to the field of religious studies in better understanding how religious ritual initiations impact the psychology, physiology, and spirituality of males. I have shown evidence that suggests that religious conversion and religious pilgrimages can greatly influence a male's identity by increasing their piety and mental/physical fortitude due to the hardships present within some of these rituals. I have also shown evidence that if someone undergoes a ritual initiation during their youth, they are more likely to adhere to their religion into adulthood. Thirdly, my research has revealed information concerning how certain Christians, Jews, and Muslims construct manhood and that some traits such as responsibility, self-restraint, humility, etc., can be found in all of them. From these results, I hope that readers may see the potential benefits that ritual initiations can offer one and that they may more critically look on how ritual initiations influence a society.

Though I have tried to go in depth on how ritual initiations/rites of passages influence Christian, Muslim, and Jewish men, it may benefit the field of religious studies for further studies to be done on males of non-Abrahamic faiths. If further studies are done on how ritual initiations impact males from the religions of Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Shinto, etc., scholars may find more enlightening information as to the methods used to transform a male's identity. As we saw in my study, amongst Christianity, Judaism, and Islam there were similarities as to the methods used to initiate males. There were also similarities as to how people of these religions rear boys into men and how manhood is constructed. It is possible, therefore,

that there may be some similarities amongst religions with origins in Asia, such as Buddhism, Hinduism, and Sikhism. Given that the virtue of ‘self-restraint’ was a common theme from my studies of the Abrahamic religions, it would be fascinating to see what themes are common for how Eastern religions construct masculinity. Also given that monasteries exist among certain Eastern religions, it would not be surprising to discover that the act of self-restraint is also practiced by people of Eastern faiths. The discouragement of seeking worldly desires is not exclusive to Abrahamic religions, though it is possible that Eastern religions will have different reasons for discouraging its adherents from seeking worldly pleasures. It may also be the case that Eastern religions have different views on what constitutes a worldly pleasure, which would then bring into question the methodology for how self-restraint is practiced. Going from this, it would also be interesting to see a future study that focuses on how non-Abrahamic religions construct the traits of discipline, humility, and responsibility. Within Judaism, Christianity, and Islam it is expected that one should humble oneself before God. Because Hinduism involves multiple gods and Buddhism does not involve directly worshipping a god, there might be enlightening finds on how the males in these religions humble themselves.

Furthermore, because my study was focused solely on males, there is room to expand the study by researching the influence that ritual initiations have on females. In my study, we saw in an article by Michael Satlow (1996) that certain Jewish rabbis hold that men must practice self-restraint. Interestingly, these same rabbis believe that self-restraint is a uniquely male trait and that females are unable to practice this virtue. This warrants further research into how women are reared within certain Jewish circles, as it is evident that specific groups of Jews will treat the rearing of boys and girls differently and have distinctions between the concepts of ‘manhood’ and ‘womanhood’. The same can be said within Islam because, according to Zahra Ayubi

(2019), certain premodern Muslim ethics treat the rearing of boys and girls differently. In Ayubi's study, she writes that, "Boys are meant to be socialized from infancy to become leaders in the social and domestic hierarchies of power and intellect, and girls are meant to be socialized from infancy to play an instrumental role in their husbands' ethical formation" (Ayubi, 2019, p. 1182). From this statement, it can be speculated that Muslims who adhere to older concepts of 'manhood' and 'womanhood' may also have clear distinctions between how males and females ought to be reared. This information may possibly point towards a difference in how females experience ritual initiation within Islam. Looking back at Klinken's (2012) study with the Zambian Pentecostals, we saw that the men who converted to Pentecostalism made sure to practice self-restraint in regards to their daily actions, especially those actions that concerned sexuality. The interviewees mentioned that they made efforts to avoid premarital intercourse and they even mentioned how they felt bad for kissing their fiancées. It would certainly be interesting to see further studies that reveal if the virtue of 'self-restraint' is encouraged for women and if so, how it compares to how men are taught this virtue.

From my research, I hope to have given a fair representation of how certain members of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism initiate their males. However, there is also the potential case that my research may not represent these religions as a whole. For instance, within Protestant Christianity, there are many denominations which may have varying forms of ritual initiation (if they even practice initiation). Denominations such as Anglican, Presbyterian, and Open Brethren would need to be studied on how they construct masculinity so as to better compare them to their other Christian counterparts. Because members of other Protestant denominations do not structure their church services in the same way a Catholic, Pentecostal, or Orthodox Christian church might, there is a fair chance that there will be significant differences in how males of

other Protestant denominations view masculinity. Also, due to the various sects within Protestantism, it is possible that the traits that are considered masculine among Pentecostals will not hold the same for other Protestant denominations. Additionally, it would be interesting to have a general comparison of the similarities and differences between how Christians of Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant churches initiate their members. After all, Christianity is a religion with diverse concepts of how one can make a connection with God. Because of this, a deep study to understand how manhood and ritual initiation impact one's spiritual connection is warranted.

Within Judaism and Islam, there is also room for more research to be done. In regards to Islam, my study primarily looked at how a Muslim's Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca) transformed their religious identities. Though the Hajj is a very important obligation for Muslims, future research could study the effects of how converting to Islam influences one's identity. We witnessed from Al-Ajarma's (2021) study that Muslims who returned from their Hajj have a high chance of increased religious piety. If research were to be done that examined how a newly converted Muslim's identity is transformed, this could potentially reveal that Muslim converts have similar experiences as the Pentecostal converts in Klinken's (2012) study. In Klinken's (2012) article, he stated that the Zambian Pentecostal converts describe their conversion experience as being 'born-again'. This 'born-again' process was described by the interviewees as transitioning into a new life that discarded their previous life. One of the interviewees further described their conversion experience as, "God has forgiven me, because I confessed and repented at that time. And God is a God of a second chance; he has given me a second chance. I am in my second life." (Klinken, 2012, p. 221). Thus, it would be interesting to discover if Muslim converts also describe their conversion experience as being 'born-again'. Given that

Islam requires its followers to perform certain mandatory actions such as praying five times daily and fasting for a set period, it would not be surprising to find that newly converted Muslims likewise view their conversion as being given a second chance at life. Similarly, if more studies were to be done in Jewish synagogues, both orthodox and non-orthodox, this could uncover more information on how masculinity is constructed. As with the case of Christian denominations, I speculate that there will also be differences in how orthodox and non-orthodox Jews conceive manhood and even how they construct their bar/bat mitzvah ceremonies.

Though this paper was solely focused on religious ritual initiations, this is not to say that secular forms of initiation are nonexistent or should be ignored. In fact, it would make an interesting study to compare the influence of secular initiation versus religious initiation within a determined community. From this, future studies can be developed to understand what methodologies make a secular initiation successful versus the ones that make a religious one successful. Because a secular initiation may not incorporate a spiritual component, this may therefore change its purpose and even might result in the recipients having significantly different experiences than their religious counterparts.

Of course, all these speculations are not guaranteed to be true and so, it will be up to the task of future research to determine how ritual initiations/rites of passage and manhood are constructed among the various sects within Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Though my study may bring forth more questions to be asked concerning the consistency of the impacts of ritual initiations among other religions, it is my hopes that this paper will at least spark an interest in scholars to further discuss the importance that religious ritual initiations have on the individual and community.

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